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ABSTRACT

The College of Education at the University of Akron (Ohio) approaches program delivery, service, research, and student diversity through collaborative efforts, which are complementary to and facilitated by an urban education program. The Decker Family Development Center is a collaborative project involving the university, the school district, a local hospital, and two social service agencies in an effort to provide comprehensive, coordinated medical, educational, and social support services. Personnel from a major corporation, students and teachers in an urban middle school, and faculty from the school of education collaborate in Business Education Alliance Reaches Schools (BEARS)--a project to enhance sixth graders' school learning through demonstration of the relevance of skills and subjects taught in schools and their application in the work place. The Minority Teacher Preparation Program (MTP2) recruits African Americans, provides teacher training, and places the teachers in local schools. Business Education Collaboration on Minorities in Education (BECOME) is a scholarship/loan program targeted to African Americans majoring in teacher education. Faculty from the College of Education have been awarded a grant to conduct an in-depth assessment with an adult literacy program--Principles of the Alphabetic Literacy System (PALS), a program in which the faculty continues to be involved. An 18-entry bibliography on collaboration is appended. (IAH)

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Business, Social Agencies, and Education Institutions: Collaboration for Urban Education Needs

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Reports of the '80s on education provided suggestions from the public sector, business, and other educators to the elementary and secondary schools and institutions of teacher preparation (The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988; The Holmes Group, 1990; Feistritzer, 1984; Feistritzer, 1985; Fox, 1983). One common element in all reports related to the need for greater collaboration among schools, universities, and the community, especially business. Business leaders have long felt the need to do something about elementary and secondary schools in developing student literacy for the work place. Much of the focus has addressed at-risk students in these schools, however, as these students approach higher education, the urban at-risk high school student usually remains the urban at-risk college student.

The University of Akron with a student population of 28,000 urban undergraduate and graduate students with a mean age of 29, portrays the "non-traditional" or "new majority" student (Elliott, 1992). Many of these students are first generation college students, head of household, parents, working 40 hours per week, and enrolled in the University full or part-time to complete an undergraduate degree in an average of eight years. Working with these students in a community which is rich in heritage and addresses the educational needs of the population, requires an open dialogue with schools, businesses, and agencies within the area.

The need for multi-institutional collaboration in colleges of education is obvious. The College of Education at The University of Akron approaches program delivery, service, research, and student diversity through collaborative efforts. All are complementary to and facilitated by an urban education program located in a supportive urban environment. These projects have brought money for teaching, research, and service to the faculty, provided field-sites for the programs, and facilitated unique experiences for undergraduate and graduate students. Likewise these projects service many aspects of the community from the infant to the welfare mother who wishes a college education to the 70-year-old grandmother wanting a GED degree.

Decker Family Development Center

This collaborative project with Barberton City Schools, Children's Hospital, and The University of Akron in conjunction with the cooperative efforts of the Summit County Department of Human Services and Akron-Summit Community Action Agency has as its major goal to enhance the quality of family life by providing medical, educational and social support services in a central location to 350 low-income families with children from birth to five-years-old. Through a variety of Federal and State grants, the Center provides services such as child care for ages birth to five, infant-toddler stimulation programs, Headstart, a special needs preschool for disabled children, Adult Basic Education/Family Literacy, parent/child play groups, speech and language therapy, health services for children, home visiting services, family support services, and nutrition education.

The belief of these three agencies is that alone not one of them could provide the services available at The Decker Center, but together they can and do make a real difference in the lives of families and their children. Helping break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, to become self-sufficient and free of public assistance, is the basic goal of this program. The staff believes that children involved in this program will stay in school and will be less likely to repeat grades or need special education.

The Decker Center has been identified as a model for Ohio and the recipient of a grant from the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. This Center not only receives state and national support and recognition but involves community support through the Kiwanis, Rotary, Senior Citizens, Community Volunteers, and the Private Industry Council.

Undergraduate and graduate students in the Colleges of Education, Home Ecology, and Sociology have field experiences in various parts of this program. Working with young children with special needs and their parents or with welfare

mothers functioning as head of the household represent experiences provided to better prepare university students to relate their careers to the community.

Business Education Alliance Reaches Schools (BEARS)

The BEARS project is designed to enhance sixth graders' school learning by demonstrating the relevancy of skills and subjects taught in school and how these skills can be applied in the work place. The project is a collaboration between personnel from a major corporation, students and teachers in an urban middle school, and faculty from the College of Education at The University of Akron.

Now in its fourth year, the objectives of the BEARS project are: (a) to demonstrate to students that the skills they are learning in schools are needed in later life; (b) to encourage students to remain in school so that they can increase their skills and knowledge base; (c) to acquaint students with job requirements; and (d) to recognize that economic compensation for jobs is usually related to career choice.

Personnel from all collaborators are included in each planning and implementing session. The school provides the physical facility and manages the proper communication with parents. The corporation extends monetary and human resources. The College of Education oversees the project, assists in curriculum development, and analyzes the data collected.

Within the school, the partnership involves the creation of three mini-companies which meet half a day once a week for 18 weeks. Pre- and post-tests are administered to the pilot and to the control groups. After the initial overview of the project, the following weeks involve the sixth graders in applying for three out of eight jobs, interviewing for positions, receiving jobs, being placed in one of three companies, and completing two job training sessions. Students keep a log of their activities and responses to these activities by writing in their diaries after each session.

In subsequent weeks, the students participate in a company tour and work their individual jobs, receiving fake paychecks from their companies. Often the work

sessions begin with a member from the business community who talks with the children about careers, education and career paths taken. The last session is a report-out from each company where personnel simulate an annual written report delivered to an audience of parents, central office school administrators, and others. A "best company" award is announced, as well as individual awards for points earned from school attendance, homework, and employee performance.

Currently, over 70 children have participated in the BEARS project in the urban middle school. Seventh and eighth graders will be included for a follow-up economic project in Spring 1993.

The BEARS project has met and exceeded its objectives by demonstrating the importance of school-learned skills, encouraging school continuance, acquainting the student with job requirements, and allowing the students to recognize the economic compensation jobs as related to career choice. The strength of the program comes from support of personnel from business and education working collaboratively for the benefit of children. Students at The University of Akron have an opportunity to work with a school-business partnership and see the relation of research to school activities.

Minority Teacher Preparation Program (MTP2)

This project is the collaboration and implementation of a cultural program in teacher preparation that has successfully built bridges between Canton City Schools, The University of Akron, Canton Urban League, and Job Training Partnership. The major objectives of the MTP^2 are to recruit, educate, and place African American teachers in schools.

The methods applied in this program include the joint planning, cooperation, and collaboration of the following structures: an urban league agency to advertise the program and identify potential education students; an industry council to provide complete funding that includes tuition, books, child care, lunch, and mileage; a state university's college of education to implement the delivery of courses leading to teacher

certification; and a school district to place these teachers. The roles and responsibilities of the structures include such components as recruitment, collaboration, communication, assessment, selection, referral, education, mentoring, follow-up, evaluation, and placement. Components vary in emphasis within each structure according to need and procedures agreed upon by the four structures.

African Americans possessing a college degree or those having competed two or more years of college are eligible to enter the program if they meet the following requirements:

1. A resident within the service delivery area of the Job Training Partnership;
2. Apply for Job Training Partnership eligibility status;
3. Have an earned undergraduate degree from an accredited college/university or be able to be certified in two and one-half years or less;
4. Participate in an orientation program;
5. Attend support meetings and activities sponsored by the collaborators;
6. Meet The University of Akron's College of Education admission requirements; and
7. Accept a teaching position with the Canton City Schools if it is offered.

Annually, there are 15 MTP^2 positions. Nineteen students have completed the program with 18 teaching in the Canton area and one teaching out of Ohio Four students began the program and did not complete it; however, two of the four re-entered the University in an alternate certification advanced program. Of the 30 students in the MTP^2, the mean age is 33, ranging from 24- to 41-years-old. There have been 25 females and five males. Most of the students are post-baccalaureate, single, supporting two children, and underemployed or unemployed. At one time in their adult lives, they have been on public assistance. Their mean grade point average is 3.2, ranging from 2.7 to 4.0 on a four-point scale. The eleven students currently enrolled are full-time

students, work 40 hours or more a week and are single parents. This project received the Ohio Governor's Award for Outstanding Programs.

Business Education Collaboration on Minorities in Education (BECOME)

This is a minority scholarship/loan program specifically targeted to African Americans majoring in Teacher Education. BECOME is a collaborative project between Akron Public Schools, GenCorp (a Fortune 500 company), and two state-assisted Ohio universities--The University of Akron and Kent State University.

This project identifies students of racial and cultural diversity at the secondary and post-secondary level and encourages them to enter teacher training programs. In addition, the project provides support to the selected students during their training years in the form of financial assistance, summer employment, mentoring, counseling, and referral services.

The major goal of the project is to increase the racial and cultural diversity of educators employed by the Akron Public Schools and to recruit African Americans and other individuals from traditionally under-represented groups to the teaching profession. Specific criteria for a secondary student are: (a) a high school senior enrolled in a college preparatory course of study, (b) a minimum SAT score of 800 or ACT of 18, (c) a minimum 2.75 grade point average, (d) applying to Kent State University or The University of Akron and (d) an interest in a career in education. Post-secondary students meet the following criteria to be eligible for the program: (a) second-year students at The University of Akron or Kent State University, (b) a minimum of 2.5 grade point average, and (c) an interest in a career in education.

Representatives from each of the collaborators are active in each phase of the BECOME project which include recruiting, orientation, selection, funding, educating, and job placement. The school personnel also place the students in clinical/field assignments and if mutually acceptable between the student and the school personnel, hire

the student as a teacher. The business representatives make the "forgivable upon teaching" loans and mentor the students. The universities educate, award scholarships, and evaluate the project.

This is the pilot year with five students enrolled. They are between 18 and 31 years of age. All are female. For 1993-94, another corporation has committed loan money and a social fraternity has donated scholarship money. Six students will be added for the 1993-94 academic year.

Principles of the Alphabetic Literacy System (PALS)

PALS is an IBM computer laboratory established to assist adults in developing their literacy skills in order to obtain employment thereby no longer needing public assistance. Adults enrolled in this project are receiving public assistance and reading around a fifth grade level. Faculty from The University of Akron, College of Education were awarded a grant from the Summit County Department of Human Resources to conduct an in-depth assessment with PALS clients to study eight objectives:

1. Develop an appropriate pretest and post-test model to assess a computer-based adult literacy program;

2. Determine both qualitative and quantitative learning increases in an adult literacy population;

3. Compare learning increases of PALS students to a selected ABE program over the same time period;

4. Develop an intake form for gathering qualitative and quantitative data for an adult literacy program;

5. Determine the level of self-esteem of PALS clients prior to participation in the PALS program, and the level of self-esteem after participation;

6. Study client history to determine the relationship of family literacy to clients' current reading level; and

7. Study client history to determine if past learning disabilities are related to a client's current reading level.

The study of clients using a variety of test instruments, observation, and interaction provided information related to these objectives. Following a two-year study, the information was provided to the Department of Human Resources in a lengthy report suggesting the need for more activities to focus on the development of self-esteem, that students enrolling in this program read minimally at the fifth grade level, that job related, word processing skills be related to this program, and more family involvement in the program in an attempt to break the illiteracy cycle.

The exciting part of this project is the continuation of involvement in this project. During the Summer 1992, two graduate students and one two-year student conducted a research project with mothers and children to develop skills in reading and writing as life related events. While this data is being analyzed, more projects are being discussed to further this relationship with adults trapped in the world of illiteracy. The collaboration allows our students to relate research to the immediate world outside their door, assists students in the program by providing greater personalized attention to them and their families, and assists Summit County Department of Human Services with necessary data to document the impact of their program.

These urban collaborative projects have enhanced the overall mission of the College of Education. They allow faculty to join forces with other agencies in the community to conduct joint research activities and experimentation in program delivery, and provide opportunities for faculty to contribute to the community and build their own credentials while having a direct impact on the lives of students in the urban environment. In an urban institution, community surrounds the academic setting creating a sense of community may be difficult to develop. Faculty in the College of Education have joined with business, social agencies, and the community to assist in making Northeast Ohio a better place for citizens of today and tomorrow.

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